The State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner

January 18, 2011

The Honorable Sherman Packard, Chairman, and Members of the Committee
House Transportation Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 203
Concord, NH 03301

RE: HB 117 – An act allowing additional weight for vehicles using idle reduction technology in order to promote reduction of fuel use and emissions

Dear Chairman Packard and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Environmental Services (DES) is pleased to testify in support of House Bill 117, relative to allowing additional weight for vehicles using idle reduction technology in order to promote reduction of fuel use and emissions.

Heavy duty trucks, and in particular long haul trucks, tend to idle for long periods of time for a number of reasons. Some drivers are subject to mandatory rest periods and engines are idled to maintain cabin comfort. Others have refrigeration units that operate off the main engine, requiring it to run even when the truck is stationary. Idling trucks burn fuel at approximately one gallon per hour and emit high levels of particulate and smog forming emissions that impact the health of our citizens and our environment.

The advent of idle reduction technology in recent years has made much of this idling avoidable. However, idle reduction units typically add several hundred pounds to the weight of a vehicle. Under current New Hampshire law, this additional weight is included in the weight limit of the vehicle, thus reducing the load weight that can be legally carried. This creates a significant barrier to the use of a technology that can save companies money and prevent air pollution.

In New Hampshire, heavy duty trucks account for a disproportionate percentage of the state's particulate and smog forming pollutants. As a relatively rural state, a stationary infrastructure that would allow long haul truckers to turn off their vehicles during their mandatory rest stops, such as electrified truck stops, has not offered a good economic return for facility owners and therefore has not been developed. Additionally, many truckers take their rest periods at locations other than commercial truck stops. On-board idle reduction technology allows truckers operating anywhere in the state to reduce idling, thereby saving fuel and reducing air pollution.

Currently, the New England states of Maine and Connecticut allow additional weight for idle reduction technology, and Massachusetts has legislation pending. Vermont allows the additional weight through enforcement discretion, rather than by

state statute. In order to have this technology widely adopted it is necessary for truckers to have the same allowances in all states in which they operate. The Code of Federal Regulations, Title 23, Part 658.17 (attached) allows the weight of idle reduction units to be exempted from the vehicle weight on the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. Reducing fuel use nationally helps the energy security of the country and reduces air pollutants that impact the health of our citizens and our environment. The federal rule supports uniform adoption of weight exemptions nationally. The language proposed in this bill mirrors the federal language, thus ensuring consistency and certainty for drivers who bring goods to and through New Hampshire.

We urge you to pass this legislation because it will help create certainty for the trucking industry and encourage investment in idle reduction technology, thereby reducing diesel engine emissions, conserving fuel, and saving money that can be reinvested in the economy. Should you have further questions or need additional information please feel free to contact Robert R. Scott, Director, Air Resources Division (271-1088, robert.scott@des.nh.gov ) or Rebecca Ohler (271-6749, rebecca.ohler@des.nh.gov) of his staff.

Sincerely,

Thomas S. Burack

Thomas S. Burack
Commissioner

cc: Representative Brian Rhodes
Representative Richard Hinch
Senator Gary Lambert
Commissioner John Barthelmes, DOS